3: Rasmussen--29-30 (c. 1923) 1932 Copper Eskimo-1-2
116, 22, 789, 791

"[MPK: The functions of the shaman were:]
To procure animals for hunting.

This can be done by means of a very simple seance, in which the shaman merely gives the people of the village an opportunity to confess the various taboos they have broken. It is not always necessary to call [MPK: Sea Woman] up to the snow hut.

In addition to these public obligations, every shaman is fond of demonstrating his powers by doing tricks. One favourite trick is to hold a seal thong in the hand in the qag^{s}je and let it be severed before the eyes of everybody there; after many mysterious manipulations the thong is then shown to be whole and uncut.

I have myself seen this trick performed on many occasions, and noticed that besides the whole thong, the shaman had a short line of just the same thickness and appearance. It was this line that he allowed someone in the qag^{s}je to cut, and, while working to make it whole again it was never difficult to conceal the severed piece in his clothing.

There are many ways of proving that one is in communication with helping spirits. It is a very common thing that when a thong is thrown from the inside of the qag^{s}je out through the passage, it is seized by one or more spirits outside. As soon as the line is taut the [30] shaman gets people inside to haul on to the other end of it, and sometimes the spirits show that their strength is enormous.

Another favourite trick is to hold a mitten on the end of a snow beater out into the

passage and, when the beater is withdrawn, the mitten is no longer there. If it is stuck out again, the mitten reappears on it.

During one of these demonstrations at which I was present, one of the members of my expedition came unexpectedly into the passage where the spirits were supposed to be, and there he saw two men -- the shaman's assistants -- hastily conceal themselves in an offshoot from the passage."